



January 28/29, 2012
Genesis 16-17
“Learning to Wait”
Pastor Gary Hamrick

Have you ever felt like God wasn’t working fast enough for you? Have you ever felt like your prayers weren’t being heard because you weren’t getting the “results” you wanted? Have you ever felt like patience was not one of your virtues? If you answered “Yes” to any of these questions, this Bible study is for you!

Last week’s study was about Abram and Sarai, who were getting on in years. Abram was pretty much resigned to the idea that Eliezer, his servant, would be the one to inherit his estate.¹ But, the Lord appeared to him and made a covenant promise that his descendants would outnumber the stars in the sky.²

Ten years later, Abram starts to consider the fact that Sarai had not conceived and was at the point of being too old to have children. So, he agrees to Sarai’s plan to have sex with his wife’s maidservant to help God fulfill his promise. Ten years, after all, is quite a long time to wait on something you’re waiting to see come true in your life. What Abram doesn’t know is that it will be another 15 years before he and Sarah have Isaac – the child of the promise. Twenty-five years of waiting³ makes it easy to understand that it’s a true statement when someone says, “Waiting on God is hard!”

Waiting On God Is Hard

1. The Bible has a lot to say about waiting on the Lord, including the following Scriptures taken from the book of Psalms.
 - a. [Psalm 27:14](#) – *“Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.”*

¹ [Genesis 15:2](#)

² [Genesis 15:4](#)

³ Twenty-five years covers the time between [Genesis 12](#) and [Genesis 15](#).

- b. [Psalm 33:20](#) - *"We wait in hope for the Lord; he is our help and our shield."*
 - c. [Psalm 37:7a](#) - *"Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him..."*
 - d. [Psalm 40:1](#) - *"I waited patiently for the Lord; he turned to me and heard my cry."*
 - e. [Isaiah 30:18](#) - *"Yet the Lord longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion. For the Lord is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him."*
2. There doesn't seem to be a single verse in the Bible that instructs anyone to hurry; the instruction is always to wait.
 - a. This tells us that the human heart is more inclined to get ahead of God and to become impatient with God's timing.
 - b. It doesn't help that we live in such a fast-paced world, which has instant this, and instant that.
 3. In short, we've lost the discipline of waiting!
 4. Many people pray about something and if the Lord doesn't answer the prayer in a day or two, they become distraught and think, "God doesn't have very good customer service!"
 5. The lesson to be learned from Abram is that when we don't wait on the Lord, when we don't trust his timing, when we don't wait for his best, we end up taking matters into our own hands (we feel like the best thing is to help God make things happen) and we make things worse!
 6. Wait is hard, but the alternative is worse when you consider this account, which has conflict, mistreatment, blaming and fighting.
 - a. [Genesis 16:4](#) - Hagar despised ⁴ Sarai.
 - b. [Genesis 16:5](#) - Sarai blames Abram.
 - c. [Genesis 16:6](#) - Hagar is mistreated ⁵ by Sarai, and Hagar flees into the desert.
 - i. The Lord came to comfort her, because he is El-Roi, "the God who sees." ([Genesis 16:13](#))
 - ii. By the way, the Lord promises that Ishmael's descendants would be great as well. ⁶
 7. Why did God delay in fulfilling his promise to Abram?

⁴ The Hebrew word for despised, is *qalal*, which means, "to belittle or to curse."

⁵ The Hebrew word for mistreated, is *anah*, which means, "to browbeat."

⁶ The Arab people are descendants of Ishmael, of whom God said, "He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers." ([Genesis 16:12](#))

- a. God had to wait until Abram's body was as good as dead when it came to the ability to father a child, so that the birth of Isaac would be an undeniable work of God, rather than an act of the flesh.
- b. [Hebrews 11:12](#) - *"And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore."*
- c. Simply put, God's delay was for God's display!

How Are We To Wait?

Waiting Is Doing

8. Waiting is not inactivity, and it's not sitting around doing nothing with the expectation that God will just drop someone or something into your lap.
9. If you need a job, circulate your resume, go to interviews and network with others.

Waiting Is Trusting

10. Waiting is trusting God, and being content right where you are.
11. Elizabeth Elliott said, "I know not what the future holds; what in one hour may be; but I can wait while it unfolds, and trust implicitly."
12. "There is nothing - no circumstance, no trouble, not testing - that can ever touch me until, first of all, it has gone past God and past Christ right through to me. If it has come that far, it has come with a great purpose, which I may not understand at the moment. But as I refuse to become panicky, as I lift up my eyes to Him and accept it as coming from the throne of God for some great purpose of blessing to my own heart, no sorrow will ever disturb me, no circumstance will cause me to fret, for I shall rest in the joy of what my Lord is - that is the rest of victory!" - Alan Redpath, Senior Pastor at Moody Church, Chicago, 1953-1962.⁷

Waiting Is Praying

13. Waiting is casting your cares on the Lord and making your requests known.
14. Waiting is seeking God's wisdom, and listening to his voice.

⁷ As with all Wikipedia information, caution is advised. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alan_Redpath

Waiting Is Learning

15. Waiting is trying to learn what God is trying to teach us.
16. Waiting is looking for the ways the Lord is helping you learn and grow that would not have been the case if you had your way.

Waiting Is Believing

17. Waiting is believing that God's will is the better way than our way.
18. Waiting is believing that God is *a/ways* looking out for us and believing that he loves us!

Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read [Genesis 16](#) to provide an overview for this study.
3. Allow people to share their experiences about the changes in the way we get news, food, etc. Conversation starters include the following:
 - a. TV news used to come on at 11:00 p.m., and then it was 10:00 p.m., 6:00 p.m., 5:00 p.m., 4:00 p.m., and 12:00 p.m. Now it's 24-hours of news on cable TV.
 - b. Remote controls for TV versus having to get up to change the channel, which, by the way, would have been fewer than ten choices!
 - c. Having a baby used to be a three or four day stay in the hospital; now it seems like we're not too far away from drive-thru delivery!
 - d. Having to wait a week or so to have camera film developed, instead of instant viewing and editing on digital cameras.
4. Read and discuss the following Scriptures Pastor Gary mentioned from the book of Psalms concerning waiting on the Lord. (See #1a - #1e)
5. Would your family and friends consider you to be a patient person?
 - a. As you have matured in your relationship with the Lord, would you say that you are more patient today than you used to be?
 - b. What are some of the reasons why you're still having difficulty?
 - c. What would you say the number one "secret" to being patient?

6. Spend time talking about times when you've run ahead, so to speak, of the Lord.
 - a. How did it work out when you took things into your own hands?
 - b. Why did you feel as though you needed to jumpstart things and help God out?

7. Read and discuss these quotes:
 - a. "I know not what the future holds; what in one hour may be; but I can wait while it unfolds, and trust implicitly." – Elizabeth Elliott ⁸
 - b. "There is nothing – no circumstance, no trouble, not testing – that can ever touch me until, first of all, it has gone past God and past Christ right through to me. If it has come that far, it has come with a great purpose, which I may not understand at the moment. But as I refuse to become panicky, as I lift up my eyes to Him and accept it as coming from the throne of God for some great purpose of blessing to my own heart, no sorrow will ever disturb me, no circumstance will cause me to fret, for I shall rest in the joy of what my Lord is – that is the rest of victory!" – Alan Redpath, Senior Pastor at Moody Church, Chicago, 1953–1962. ⁹
 - c. "Any concern too small to be turned into a prayer is too small to be made into a burden." – Corrie ten Boom ¹⁰
 - d. "I have learned to hold all things loosely, so God will not have to pry them out of my hands." – Corrie ten Boom
 - e. "When a train goes through a tunnel and it gets dark, you don't throw away the ticket and jump off. You sit still and trust the engineer. " – Corrie ten Boom

8. Close your time in prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to help each person: remember that waiting on the Lord means doing, trusting, praying, learning and believing; embrace the fact that God's delay is often for his display!

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).

⁸ <http://www.elisabethelliott.org/index.html>

⁹ All Wikipedia information should be read with the understanding that there could be factual errors or misinformation, which means caution is advised. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alan_Redpath

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